

Project Readiness and Environmental Risk Assessment

State and Local Approvals

The county transit plans in Wake, Durham, and Orange counties include the Triangle Mobility Hub and SPOKE project. The project is also included in the 2050 Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP) – a joint long-range transportation plan adopted by the Durham-Chapel Hill-Carrboro Metropolitan Planning Organization (DCHC MPO) and the Capital Area Metropolitan Planning Organization (CAMPO). Per DCHC MPO’s adopted practice, the DCHC MPO will add the Triangle Mobility Hub and SPOKE project to the Metropolitan Transportation Improvement Plan (TIP) and Statewide Transportation Improvement Plan (STIP) once federal funding becomes available in coordination with NCDOT and FTA. Refer to Appendix A - Letters of Support for expressed support provided by the DCHC MPO and NCDOT for the project.

The property owner, Research Triangle Foundation, passed a resolution on August 25, 2023 for the Triangle Mobility Hub. The resolution approved siting the Triangle Mobility Hub on the 19.4 acres located on the south side of NC 54 in RTP (Durham County PINs #0747-36-2290 and 0747-36-4637). The resolution also provided support for transit-oriented development (TOD) on the property. It is anticipated that the Research Triangle Foundation will review and approve accessory, ancillary, and architectural drawings (per RTP Covenants). Level 4 site plans and construction drawings will be submitted to Durham County Planning and Development Services for their respective review and approval. The project will include all necessary review and approval by NCDOT, including a driveway permit, encroachment agreements, and signal installation agreements.

Project Schedule

The anticipated project schedule is illustrated below. The project has completed a feasibility study, conceptual design, and TOD study. Stakeholder engagement with agency partners, jurisdictions, Boards, transit riders, and the general public has been ongoing since the feasibility study phase. The project has kicked off the schematic design phase.

Activity	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027	2028
Feasibility Study	█	█	█					
Conceptual Design		█	█	█				
TOD Study			█	█				
Schematic Design			█	█	█			
Preliminary Engineering				█	█			
Environmental Review					█	█		
Final Design						█	█	
Permitting & Right-of-Way							█	█
Construction							█	█
Pre-Revenue Service								█
Open for Service								█

Planning & NEPA

TOD Planning: RTP has undertaken conceptual planning to envision how TOD could work on the site in conjunction with siting the Triangle Mobility Hub.

Survey: A site survey will be conducted to fully index and understand the site's development potential and constraints to inform the feasibility of overall TOD site planning concepts and transit facility design and location.

Environmental Permits and Reviews: The project is on track to complete all environmental requirements within the next 18 months.

It is assumed that the proposed project lead agency will be FTA. Early coordination about the project has begun with FTA Region 4, including a briefing in August 2023. An environmental checklist will be completed and transmitted to FTA Region 4 for review during the project development phase of the project. The checklist will be used to determine the required level of environmental review. A Type-C Categorical Exclusion is anticipated based on the scope, scale, and complexity of the project; however, the classification of the environmental document will be determined by FTA during the project development phase. This study is anticipated to be completed in less than 12 months and will result in environmental readiness for the project.

Environmental review will be conducted to gather information and document existing conditions. According to Durham County GIS, the site is not in a local or national historic district or home to a local historic landmark. There are also no historic resources identified in the vicinity of the project. Therefore, extensive consultation with the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) is not anticipated.

According to Durham County GIS, the site is not in a floodplain nor include known wetlands or watershed protection areas. The site is not in the NC brownfields program and there are no known hazardous waste or landfill sites on the parcel. There are no known parks, recreation and aquatics centers, or trails on the site.

Natural systems field investigations for Threatened and Endangered Species and wetland and stream delineations will occur, and a preliminary Jurisdictional Delineation package will be prepared, during environmental review.

The site is vacant; therefore, no Environmental Justice (EJ) populations encompass the site and no Limited English Proficiency populations are present. A Title VI and Environmental Justice Report will be completed for the Triangle Mobility Hub and the accompanying bus service expansion in the SPOKE network consistent with FTA Circulars 4702.1B and 4703.1 as well as GoTriangle's adopted Service Change Policy.

A traffic study will be completed to assess the increase in bus service associated with the expansion and traffic impacts to businesses along NC 54. Anticipated traffic impacts during construction will also be analyzed. A signal warrant analysis may be needed. A Phase I Hazardous Materials assessment will also be conducted followed by a Phase II if necessary.

A revised project cost estimate will be prepared, which will include utility relocation costs. Right-of-way acquisition needs will be determined during project development and coordinated with the property owner RTF.

Reviews, Approvals, and Permits by Other Agencies

Major capital projects that are funded through the Wake County Transit funds are complex, regionally significant, typically involve multiple jurisdictions, involve significant investment, and their planning, design, and construction phases are expected to span several years.

The Wake Transit Concurrence Process was designed to streamline verification of compliance among the broad variety of agencies that have oversight of or bear some other responsibility in regulated resources or other interests that may be impacted by a proposed project. The Triangle Mobility Hub and SPOKE project will adhere to the Wake County Transit Concurrence Process through CAMPO as the project is partially funded using Wake Transit funds.

Federal Transportation Requirements Affecting State and Local Planning

Throughout the next phases of the project planning, preliminary engineering, NEPA, and final design process, the project team will coordinate closely with FTA Region 4 staff to ensure that the project will be in full compliance with all federal requirements. Following award of federal funding, GoTriangle will work with the DCHC MPO and NCDOT to add the federal award to the TIP and STIP. DCHC MPO presently only includes projects in the TIP or STIP with budgeted state or federal funds, therefore this project is not yet included in those programs.

Existing Conditions

The RTF TOD site is a primarily undeveloped, wooded location comprising approximately 19.4 acres. The site is constrained by a number of factors. Topography on the site ranges from a high point at 406 feet to a low point at 340 feet, constituting a 66-foot grade change across the site. Slopes above 10% are found throughout the site. Duke Energy also has two powerline easements, one running east-west on the southern portion of the site, and one running north-south on the eastern edge of the site. Combined, these easements take up 3.7 acres. An additional 1.1 acres is cut off by the southern powerline easement, limiting its development potential. Accounting for these challenges and anticipating potentially needed setbacks, the site contains approximately 13 acres of development area.

According to Durham County GIS, the site is not in a local or national historic district or home to a local historic landmark. The site is in the Jordan Lake watershed. The site is not in a floodplain nor include known wetlands or watershed protection areas. The site is not in the NC brownfields program and there are no known hazardous waste or landfill sites on the parcel. There are no known parks, recreation and aquatics centers, or trails on the site.

Durham GIS is available at <https://maps.durhamnc.gov/>.

The following GIS layers do not overlap with this site

PIN 0747362290 (17.18 acres)		PIN 0747364637 (2.2 acres)	
X	National Wetland Inventory	X	National Wetland Inventory
X	Neighborhood Protection Overlay	X	Neighborhood Protection Overlay
X	Longtime Homeowner Grant Assistance Area	X	Longtime Homeowner Grant Assistance Area
X	Local Historic Landmarks	X	Local Historic Landmarks
X	City Sewer Drain to County (County 80% Sewer Area)	X	City Sewer Drain to County (County 80% Sewer Area)
X	Local Historic Districts	X	Local Historic Districts
X	National Historic Districts	X	National Historic Districts
X	Airport Overlay	X	Airport Overlay
X	Watershed Protection Overlay	X	Watershed Protection Overlay
X	Major Transportation Corridor	X	Major Transportation Corridor
X	Transitional Office Overlay	X	Transitional Office Overlay

Public Engagement

The project is included in the county transit plans for Wake, Durham, and Orange counties, which are built upon robust public engagement and set the vision and priorities for transit investment in each county. For a description of the public engagement efforts to date specific to this project, refer to the RTC Relocation Feasibility Study in Appendix G.

A robust public engagement program will be used by Go Triangle to determine any disproportionate or adverse impacts to EJ populations and ensure meaningful engagement with minority and low-income populations in compliance with Title VI.

The Triangle Mobility Hub and SPOKE project’s Community Participation Plan will prioritize strategies that engage community members who have been historically excluded from decision-making and ensure voices are elevated, heard, and considered. The community-center approach will engage community members in conversations aimed at developing solutions to reconnect communities and take initial, meaningful steps at addressing inequities created by the freeway.

Feasibility study

Public feedback was collected during the RTC Relocation Feasibility Study (Appendix G). Outreach efforts were targeted to transit riders at the existing Regional Transit Center. The survey was paired with virtual recorded presentations, social media outreach, website updates, and email blasts, and was offered in English and Spanish, all with a focus on current transit riders. More than 3,000 comments informed priorities for the project, including transit speed and reliability, passenger experience, pedestrian access, and increased service.

The Triangle Mobility Hub and service improvements embodied in the SPOKE network were featured in the recently adopted Durham Transit Plan and Wake Transit Vision Plan Update. The

robust public engagement included in these plans demonstrated strong support for the project and fast, reliable regional transit connections. Refer to Appendices E and H for more information.

Measures of effectiveness for equitable outreach	
Representation	Participants represent a wide range of community members, including residents in historically underserved areas
Accessibility	Engagement methods are available to all, including those with disabilities, limited resources, and limited English proficiency
Inclusivity	Marginalized and underrepresented participants feel valued
Resources	Resources are allocated equitably across communities
Equitable Outcomes	Decisions resulting from engagement are fair and equitable
Decision-Making	Input gathered influences decisions and policies
Relationships	The project builds trust and ongoing relationships
Capacity Building	Efforts ensure stakeholders are able to fully participate
Transparency	Stakeholders understand how decisions are made
Equity Metrics	Track progress toward goals, close gaps, and address disparities

Schematic design

Schematic design will begin in Fall 2023. A Community Engagement and Communications Plan will include a stakeholder assessment, goals/objectives, tactics, schedule, and evaluation metrics. The stakeholder assessment will identify community partners to create awareness of the project, gather input, and ensure typically underserved voices in the community are heard. A Community Advisory Group will be developed with membership anticipated from Durham Housing Authority, Durham Technical Community College, North Carolina Central University, among community organizations, to guide the process, create awareness of the project, and solicit input.

Planned engagement activities include multi-modal stakeholder charrettes, small group meetings, agency coordination, community drop-in sessions, pop-ups at transit facilities and gathering places, briefings, and an online open house. GoTriangle will offer briefings to neighborhoods and community organizations and will attend community events. Materials will be written in English and Spanish. Electronic and mail-in/drop-off options will be used to gather input. Discussions around workforce development opportunities, partnerships, and job creation with employers, educational institutions, and other job creators during this phase.

Final design






Final design is anticipated to begin at the execution of the NAE grant agreement. Community engagement will build upon the momentum of prior phases. The Community Engagement and Communications Plan will be refined based on lessons learned. The project team will continue to create awareness of workforce development opportunities through agency partnerships with employers and educational opportunities. GoTriangle will conduct job fairs to create awareness of employment opportunities related to construction of the Triangle Mobility Hub during this phase with contractors and disadvantaged business enterprises (DBEs).

Construction

Additional engagement tactics will be employed during construction. Construction opportunities will be shared with local communities, including small businesses and DBEs. Advanced notice of construction activities will be provided to properties located near the construction site as well as for those traveling through the NC 54 corridor. Construction mitigation requirements related to noise, dust, and vibration will be included in contractor agreements. Signage along construction fencing will create awareness and continue to build excitement for the project.

Partnerships

This project is the result of a long-standing collaborative partnership between multiple agencies and organizations that consistently work closely together to solve regional public transit challenges and implement successful projects.

	Partner	Collaboration Approach
	Ambassadors	Partnerships with community ambassadors will support engagement by underserved and marginalized community members.
	Government	Collaboration with the DCHC MPO and City of Durham will support equitable engagement strategies to ensure the voices of transit riders and disadvantaged residents are represented and their needs prioritized. Coordination with CAMPO and NCDOT will ensure the project is integrated with planned BRT, Triangle Bikeway, NC 54 corridor improvements, and future rail service.
	Education	Partnerships with Durham Technical Community College, North Carolina Central University, and Wake Technical Community College will support development and delivery of this project, and training/workforce development opportunities.
	Housing	Partnering with Durham Housing Authority and Durham Technical Community College to plan and implement transit investments will support residents living in DHA communities and support planned affordable housing investments by both organizations
	Employment	Awareness of job opportunities will be conducted through job fairs, and direct outreach including engaging minority-owned businesses, women-owned businesses, and other historically underutilized businesses (HUBs) to plan, design, and construct GoTriangle facilities as well as operate and maintain its transit system.

Demonstrated Stewardship of Past Federal Funding

GoTriangle has proven technical capacity and capability to implement locally and federally funded facilities projects in support of GoTriangle’s Capital Program. To date, GoTriangle has received federal grant funding from the FHWA, USDOT, and FTA through grant programs including:

- FHWA Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality Improvement Program (CMAQ): FY2023; \$1,000,000
- FHWA STBGDA: 2023; \$1,500,000
- USDOT 2018 BUILD: 2018; \$20 million
- FTA Low-No Emission Grant: 2020; \$943,000
- FTA Low-No Emission Grant: FY23: \$1,672,000
- FTA 5307 Urbanized Area Formula Grant: 2023; \$2,900,000

GoTriangle is successfully progressing construction of the \$40.4 million Raleigh Union Station Bus Facility (known as “RUS Bus”) – funded in part by the \$20 million-dollar USDOT 2018 BUILD award. This grant award will help construct a bus transfer facility that will connect to Raleigh Union Station on land GoTriangle acquired in 2005 with the help from a FTA grant. The RUS Bus BUILD project is part of a joint development, with a private development partner who is jointly managing the design and construction of the facility. In April 2022, construction started on the facility, meeting the RUS Bus BUILD grant project start construction milestone. The project is on track for completion ahead of the BUILD grant sunset date within budget.

Technical, Legal, and Financial Capacity

There are no anticipated technical, legal, or financial barriers to the successful implementation of the Triangle Mobility Hub and SPOKE project. GoTriangle is a designated recipient of FTA funding and has consistently demonstrated the capacity to successfully deliver projects funded through FTA grants.

GoTriangle staff includes planning, design, construction, and operations professionals who are experienced in delivering high-quality transit improvements within scope, schedule, and budget. GoTriangle staff also includes administrative, legal, procurement and contracts, finance, and real estate professionals experienced in federal contracting, federal requirements, policies and procedures, and compliance. In addition, GoTriangle manages on-call pools of highly capable consultant teams available to help manage and deliver projects as an extension to agency staff.

Local funding through the Wake, Durham, and Orange County Transit Plans has been committed to the project. GoTriangle is the state-designated Tax District Administrator of the County Transit Plans for Wake, Durham, and Orange counties. The GoTriangle Board is charged with adopting budgets for each of the plans, among other financial responsibilities associated with the transit plans. The adopted FY23 budgets include the 20% local match to support this grant application.